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LOCAL NEWS: Rockford

## Sundstrand to turn in Superfund-cleanup plan

■ The EPA says the aerospace company is required only to design the process to purify tainted groundwater.

By GAYLE WORLAND, *Rockford Register Star*
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ROCKFORD — The largest manufacturer in the Rock River Valley, Hamilton Sundstrand, has agreed to design a cleanup plan for its property on 23rd Avenue between Ninth and 11th streets, one of four major "source areas" that the EPA blames for causing groundwater pollution in the Southeast Rockford Superfund site.

The aerospace company "has already sent us a check" for \$246,403 to pay for past government studies and analysis of the company's Plant One, said Russ Hart, a remedial project manager based at the U.S. EPA's Chicago office.

Those government studies found that industrial solvents were stored in metal drums and in 14 underground tanks on the property from the early 1960s to the late 1980s. Jet fuel and other petroleum-based materials were released at the plant as well, according to EPA documents.

"It's an old industrial town," said David Rose, who lives a block from the facility with his wife and two children. "If they're looking toward even 2050 with an eye to getting it cleaned up, that's good. Rockford should do all it can do above ground and underground to clean itself up."

EPA officials expect a final work-plan design to be completed by summer. The cleanup technology could be in place by mid-2005. The plan is expected to operate for at least three to five years.

The agreement between Hamilton Sundstrand and the EPA requires only that the company pay design costs. That could run about \$500,000.

"They would do the main brunt of the work, with oversight from us," Hart said. The EPA has estimated the entire cleanup process could cost

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Hart said. The EPA has estimated the entire cleanup process could cost up to \$3 million, and payment for that sum would have to be discussed in future negotiations.

#### **Chemicals in the water**

Rockford Products Corp., J.L. Clark and Paoli Manufacturing also operate in Area 9/10, as the Superfund "hot spot" is known. Nylint Corp., Rohrbacher Manufacturing and Mid-States Industrial formerly were nearby, EPA officials said.

Test wells have shown that chemicals including 1,2-dichloroethylene, 1,1-dichloroethane, and vinyl chloride — which at high levels can cause kidney disease, liver damage or even death — have made their way into groundwater adjacent to or downgradient of Area 9/10. That groundwater is no longer used for drinking water.

When it drafted a list of possible cleanup methods for the property in June 2001, the Illinois EPA estimated a price tag of nearly \$8 million for the work, including \$4.3 million for vacuum wells to pull contaminants out of air pockets above the groundwater and \$3.5 million for an underground wall made of iron filings that would break down the chemicals passing through it.

The EPA later abandoned the underground wall idea because the presence of jet fuel "tends to foul the wall, rendering it less effective or ineffective," documents say.

Instead, the cleanup will require "air sparging," a technique that injects air into the contaminated groundwater, forcing pollutants into air pockets in the soil above the water table. The toxins are then sucked out of the air pockets.

Hamilton Sundstrand protested the barrier wall idea in comments to EPA, but the plan wasn't tossed out for that reason, said Hart, who described negotiations with the company as "quite smooth. There was no private agreement that if you do this, we'll do that. Nothing like that."

#### **Taking responsibility**

Hamilton Sundstrand, which employs 2,900 people in Rockford and 550 at Plant One, has identified "approximately 470 locations, mostly in the United States, where it might have some liability" for cleaning up contamination, according to its 2002 annual report. The corporation paid \$42 million for cleanups in 2002, \$61 million in 2001 and \$54 million in 2000.

Polluted wells were identified in southeast Rockford in 1984, and the area was declared a Superfund site in 1989. EPA scientists later traced the pollution to the property owned by Hamilton Sundstrand and three other major "source areas," including an abandoned dump and two defunct factories.

Those three are considered "orphan sites," leaving the government to pay for their cleanup. Work on the orphan sites could begin this year if federal funds come through in the next three months, Illinois EPA

officials said.

In January, the agency received \$300,000 to check whether chemical vapors could be leaking into homes in the Pine Manor subdivision near Ekberg Park and in houses near the former Swebco factory in the 2600 block of Marshall Street. Home air tests are expected to begin this spring.

Plant One houses Rockford Manufacturing, Rockford Electronics and the Engine and Control Systems Enterprise, all of which support Hamilton Sundstrand's aerospace business.

Industrial activity on that land extends back to at least 1926, when Rockford Milling Machine and Rockford Tool companies merged into Sundstrand Machine Tool Co.

Hamilton Sundstrand spokeswoman Melissa Marsden told the Rockford Register Star in June that the company wouldn't promise any cleanup at the site because "there are potentially hundreds of sources that might have contributed" to the groundwater.

But in late 2002, the EPA sent Hamilton Sundstrand a letter requesting a "good-faith offer for a remedial design," Marsden said in a written statement this week. The two parties signed an agreement Jan. 13.

"As a company," Marsden said, "Hamilton Sundstrand has been and will be committed to maintaining high standards to protect the health and welfare of our employees and our neighbors by doing our part to act on the environmental issues for which we are responsible."



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